



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Indiana

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FIVE ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH OPERATING STOLEN VEHICLE RING

PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS - Christopher Wells, 45, Indianapolis, Tommy Thompson, 48, Indianapolis, Francis Coleman, 41, Laurel, MD, Carl McCreary, 48, Frisco City, AL, and Fred Bear, 39, Avon, IN were arrested on December 29, 2009, and charged in a criminal complaint with operating a scheme to steal motor vehicles which were sold for a profit after the vehicles had been altered and provided with counterfeit titles, announced Timothy M. Morrison, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Indiana.

The complaint alleges that from about January 2007 through December 21, 2009, the defendants knowingly possessed counterfeit motor vehicle titles and counterfeit vehicle identification numbers (VIN). The complaint further alleges the defendants devised and executed a scheme in which motor vehicles were stolen and transported across state lines. The VIN numbers on the stolen vehicles were then altered and counterfeit titles matching the altered VIN numbers were supplied for the vehicles. The counterfeit motor vehicle titles were purportedly from the State of North Carolina or Washington, D.C. The altered vehicles were then sold, along with the counterfeit titles, to individual buyers for a profit.

Nine search warrants were executed at locations in Indianapolis, Alabama, and Washington, D.C. at the time of the arrests. Nine vehicles were recovered during the execution of the warrants; approximately 20 additional vehicles were recovered during the investigation.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Bradley P. Shepard, who is prosecuting this case for the government, the investigation is continuing and formal charges will be sought against the defendants at a later date. Initial appearances on the complaint were held on Tuesday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Kennard Foster for the Indiana defendants.

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These arrests followed a seven months long investigation by the United States Secret Service and the Indiana State Police with assistance by the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Greenfield Police Department, Shelbyville Police Department, Lawrence Police Department, Muncie Police Department, Greensburg Police Department, Fishers Police Department, Clarksville Police Department, Kokomo Police Department, Brownsburg Police Department, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department and the Alabama Department of Safety and Alabama Bureau of Investigation.

A complaint is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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